

VZCZCXRO4832
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHKU #0835/01 2060758
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 240758Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1913
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1275
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000835

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I
PASS H FOR CODEL REED

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/24/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [OREP](#) [KDEM](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: GOK WARMLY RECEIVES NODEL READ; PLEDGES CONTINUED
SUPPORT FOR IRAQ

REF: A. KUWAIT 0808
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 0735 (NOTAL)

Classified By: The Ambassador; reasons 1/4 (b) and (d)

Summary:

[1](#)1. (C) Amir Shaykh Sabah Al Sabah on July 20 warmly received a bipartisan Congressional delegation led by Senator Jack Reed that included Senators Chuck Hagel and Barack Obama. Senator Obama thanked the Amir for Kuwaiti support for USG efforts in Iraq and the Amir responded with his appreciation to the United States for liberating Kuwait in 1991, and pledged that Kuwait would continue to do its part to achieve success in Iraq. The Amir assured the delegation that the bilateral relationship remained solid, but cautioned that America's leaders should focus on restoring regional trust and confidence. The Amir confirmed the July 19 official naming of LTG (retired) Ali Al-Mou'min as the Kuwaiti Ambassador-designate to Iraq, but did not specify when Al-Mou'min would take up permanent residence in Baghdad. End Summary.

Mutual Appreciation

[1](#)2. (C) A bipartisan delegation, nominally led by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and including Senators Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Barack Obama (D-IL), passed twice through Kuwait last week. The first stopover, on Friday, July 18, included nearly 5 hours spent with U.S. forces stationed at Kuwaiti Ali al Salem AFB -- where U.S. airmen facilitate the transit of nearly 500K troops annually to Iraq and Afghanistan -- and at ARCENT's regional headquarters, Camp Arifjan. A putative press blackout produced front page coverage the following day of Senator Obama shooting hoops with the troops and the Embassy subsequently received a diplomatic note from the MFA requesting that NODEL Reed join the Amir and selected Kuwaiti leaders for a meeting followed by dinner.

[1](#)3. (C) The NODEL returned July 20 and was received by the Amir at his private residence, Salwa Palace (Note: Named for his late daughter. End Note). During their warm introductory, fifteen minute exchange, the Amir returned Senator Obama's gratitude for GOK contributions to the USG efforts in Iraq by expressing deep appreciation for the American rescue of Kuwait in 1991 and the continued bilateral friendship. Indeed, the Amir quipped, he considered himself practically a U.S. citizen as he has visited the U.S. regularly for the past 44 years and owns

a home there. The Amir commented on Kuwait's unique role as the victim of Iraqi aggression, but pledged his continued support in terms of hospitality to U.S. troops and bases, and low fuel costs, to a successful outcome in Iraq.

Increasing Security in Iraq: "I told you so!"

14. (C) As he often has in conversations with USG officials, including with General Petraeus during the latter's June 25 visit (reftel b), the Amir acknowledged improved security in Iraq and attributed it to the USG "finally" coming around to what he claimed to have suggested as early as 3 years ago to the senior USG leadership: "I told them to pull the U.S. troops out of the cities and let the Iraqis take the lead; they will then receive either the credit or the blame from the Iraqi people (instead of the USG)." Other than this remark, however, the Amir did not address specific concerns over withdrawal timetables or how to deal with Kuwait's troublesome neighbor to the east, Iran.

Restoring Trust and Confidence

15. (C) In response to Senator Obama's question regarding what the focus of the next administration should be, the Amir replied that the USG must work to restore trust and confidence in the region. In order for this to occur, he commented, the U.S.

KUWAIT 00000835 002 OF 002

must learn to cooperate more and understand the differences from region to region; currently the USG makes no policy distinctions in dealing with Europeans and Middle Easterners. When queried directly on the U.S.-Kuwaiti bilateral relationship the Amir quickly pronounced a clean bill of health, but expressed dismay at how "others" in the region viewed the United States, citing the negative images portrayed by Aljazeera and other Arab media outlets.

Official Announcement of Kuwaiti Ambassador to Baghdad

16. (C) Senator Obama congratulated the Amir on the July 19 official announcement of LTG (retired) Ali Al-Mou'min as Kuwait's Ambassador-designate to Iraq. Al-Mou'min will go soon, the Amir affirmed, but his permanent residence there would be delayed pending the relocation of Kuwait's Embassy to the Green Zone. (Note: Per reftel, the GOI has yet to respond to a GOK request to purchase and refurbish five units in the Green Zone to house the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission in Iraq. The current facility is in Jadriyah. End note)

Amir: "We need nuclear energy."

17. (C) In response to Senator Obama's opening on the impact of high energy costs, the Amir expressed dismay at the current situation, noting that such downturns in the U.S. have global ramifications, "even in Kuwait." He said he was not happy with the rise in oil prices, but suggested the USG, like other governments, might be overtaxing oil imports. Senators Obama and Hagel quickly rebuffed that assertion. The Amir concluded by positing that peaceful nuclear energy was necessary even for oil dependent countries like Kuwait, and once employed, would cut national energy costs in half.

Who's Who of GOK Officials Attend Dinner

18. (C) The Amir and senior GOK officials were clearly eager to take the measure of Senator Obama's "Presidential timber." Despite NODEL requests to keep the meeting short, the GoK insisted on a "light" dinner (read "banquet"), attended by the following (in protocol order):

Crown Prince Shaykh Nawaf Al Sabah
Deputy Chief, Kuwait National Guard Shaykh Mish'al Al Sabah
Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al Sabah
Advisor to the Amir, Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Atiji
Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah
Minister of State, Cabinet Affairs Faisal Al-Haji Bou Khaddour
Minister of Interior, Shaykh Jaber Al Sabah
National Security Bureau Director, Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahad
Consultant, Amiri Diwan Mohammed Abu Al-Hassan
Foreign Affairs U/S Khaled Al-Jarallah
Director, Amiri Diwan, Ahmed Al-Fahad
Amiri Protocol Chief Shaykh Khaled Al Sabah
Amiri Diwan U/S for Political/Economic Affairs Shaykh Fawaz Al Sabah
Amiri Diwan Press Secretary Yousef Al-Roumi

The Ambassador and Poloff (notetaker) accompanied the NODEL.

***** *
For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>
***** *
JONES